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World demographic trends

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Prepared in accordance with resolution 1996/2 of the Economic and Social Council, the present report provides an overview of demographic trends for the world, its major areas, the development groups and selected countries. The topics covered include population size and growth, fertility and contraception, mortality, international migration, population ageing and urbanization. The report also includes information on population policies and summarizes the concerns and views expressed by Governments with respect to major population trends.

The world population is expected to reach 6.6 billion in 2007 and may stabilize ultimately at about 9 billion people if fertility continues to decline in the less developed regions. Considerable diversity exists in the expected population growth at the country level. The population of many countries, particularly the least developed, is projected to increase markedly in the coming decades even if rapid fertility reductions are achieved. In sharp contrast, a number of developed countries are expected to see their populations decrease, largely because their fertility levels are expected to remain below replacement levels.

Most countries, both developed and developing, have experienced significant reductions in fertility as contraceptive use has increased. Today, almost all developed countries are experiencing fertility levels well below those needed to ensure the replacement of the population over the long run. Below-replacement fertility is also observed in a growing number of developing countries. However, the majority of developing countries still have fertility levels that ensure substantial population

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growth and in a small number of countries, most of which are classified as least developed, fertility levels continue to be very high.

One of the major achievements of the twentieth century was the major reduction of mortality, which was achieved almost universally. Until the 1980s, it was expected that mortality would continue decreasing in all countries. However, the emergence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic destroyed those hopes and the epidemic has been responsible for marked increases in mortality in the most affected countries, most of which are located in Africa.

In countries with low fertility, international migration has become an increasingly important component of population growth. It is estimated that in 2005, there were 191 million persons living in a country other than that in which they were born and that 60 per cent of these international migrants were living in developed countries. Female migrants constituted about half of all international migrants. Estimates-based censuses suggest that there are approximately as many migrants from developing countries in other developing countries (60 million) as there are migrants from developing countries in the developed world (62 million). Because of prevailing low fertility, international migration is making a major contribution to the growth of the population in the more developed regions.

The population of the future will be considerably older than it is today. Globally, the number of persons aged 60 or over will more than triple, passing from 705 million in 2007 to almost 2 billion in 2050.

The population of the future will be largely urban. In 2008, half of the world population will be urban for the first time in history. The number of urban dwellers, which grew rapidly since 1950, passing from 732 million to an estimated 3.2 billion in 2005, is expected to reach 4.9 billion in 2030.

In sum, the world is in the midst of an era of dynamic population change, reflected in new and diverse patterns of childbearing, mortality, international migration, urbanization and population ageing. The consequences of these population trends present opportunities and raise challenges for all societies as the twenty-first century continues to unfold.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report provides an overview of demographic trends for the world, its major areas, the development groups and selected countries. It reviews trends relating to population size and growth; fertility and contraception; mortality, including the impact of HIV/AIDS; international migration; population ageing, and urbanization. In addition, it discusses population policies and presents the concerns and views of Governments regarding the major population trends.

2. Demographic trends are discussed on the basis of the *2004 Revision of World Population Prospects*,[1] the nineteenth round of the official United Nations population estimates and projections prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Data from the *2004 Revision* include estimates for the period 1950-2005 and projections for 2005-2050 for each of the 228 countries or areas in the world. The population projections are made using the components method, which requires that explicit assumptions be made about future levels and trends in fertility, mortality and international migration.

3. Data on urban, rural and city populations are derived from the *2005 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects*[2] prepared by the Population Division. The estimates and projections of the urban, rural and city populations are consistent with the population estimates and projections at the national level presented in *World Population Prospects: the 2004 Revision*.

4. Data on contraceptive use are based on the latest information included in the database maintained by the Population Division and published in *World Contraceptive Use 2005*.[3] These data include information on current contraceptive practice and on trends in contraceptive use.

5. Estimates on the number of international migrants are derived from *Trends in Total Migrant Stock: the 2005 Revision*.[4] This dataset contains estimates of the number of migrants by sex for each country and area of the world since 1960 and provides estimates of the number of migrants as a proportion of the total population of each country at different points in time.

6. The information on population policies presented here is derived from *World Population Policies 2005*,[5] the biennial survey of population policies prepared by the Population Division. The monitoring of national population policies started after the adoption of the World Population Plan of Action in 1974 and has been carried out periodically since then. The policies monitored relate to the major population trends and the existence of time series on them allow both a description of the current situation and an analysis of changes over time.

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[1] *World Population Prospects: the 2004 Revision*, vol. I, *Comprehensive Tables* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.XIII.5); *World Population Prospects: the 2004 Revision*, vol. II, *Sex and Age Distribution of the World Population* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.XIII.6); *World Population Prospects: the 2004 Revision*, vol. III, *Analytical Report* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.XIII.7).

[2] *World Urbanization Prospects: the 2005 Revision*. United Nations Population Division, Working Paper No. ESA/P/WP/200.

[3] *World Contraceptive Use 2005*. United Nations Population Division, POP/DB/CP/Rev.2005.

[4] *Trends in Total Migrant Stock: the 2005 Revision*, United Nations Population Division, POP/DB/MIG/Rev.2005.

[5] *World Population Policies 2005* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.06.XIII.5).

II. Population size and growth

7. In July 2007, the world population is expected to reach 6.6 billion, more than two and a half times the number in 1950 (2.5 billion). According to the medium projection variant, the world population is expected to reach 7 billion by 2013, 8 billion by 2027 and 9 billion by 2048. The lengthening of the period required to gain each additional billion indicates that the growth rate of the population is expected to decline further. In fact, the growth rate has been declining since the late 1960s, when it reached a historical high of 2 per cent per year. It is currently 1.14 per cent per year and it is expected to fall to 0.38 per cent per year by 2045-2050 (see table 1).

Table 1
Population, average annual increment and growth rate for the world, the development groups and the major areas, medium variant

	Population (millions)		*Average annual increment (millions)*		*Annual growth rate (percentage)*	
Major area	*2007*	*2050*	*2005-2010*	*2045-2050*	*2005-2010*	*2045-2050*
World	6 616	9 076	76	34	1.14	0.38
More developed regions	1 217	1 236	3	-1	0.24	-0.10
Less developed regions	5 398	7 840	73	35	1.34	0.45
Least developed countries	796	1 735	19	22	2.30	1.30
Other less developed countries	4 603	6 104	54	13	1.17	0.22
Africa	945	1 937	20	23	2.11	1.21
Asia	3 996	5 217	45	10	1.12	0.19
Europe	728	653	-1	-2	-0.07	-0.37
Latin America and the Caribbean	576	783	7	2	1.29	0.22
North America	337	438	3	2	0.91	0.38
Oceania	34	48	0	0	1.15	0.45

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division: World Population Prospects DEMOBASE, extracted in 2007.

8. Overall population trends at the world level mask considerable heterogeneity among countries and regions. Developed countries are far advanced in the transition from high to low fertility and mortality and, because fertility levels in most of them remain far below the level needed to ensure the replacement of generations, many of their populations are either already decreasing or are expected to start decreasing over the medium term. At the aggregate level, the population of the more developed regions is projected to rise from 1.22 billion in 2007 to 1.25 billion in 2031 and then to start falling slowly, so that by 2050, it is still projected to be just under 1.24 billion according to the medium term projection variant.

9. In contrast with developed countries, most developing countries still have fertility levels that are above replacement level and therefore expect substantial population growth in the future. Thus, the medium projection variant indicates that the overall population of the less developed regions may increase from 5.4 billion in

2007 to 7.8 billion in 2050 (see table 1). The least developed countries, in particular, are expected to experience a near doubling of their population, passing from 0.8 billion in 2005 to over 1.7 billion in 2050, but achieving this level of growth is contingent on reducing fertility significantly in the least developed countries: from the current average level of 4.7 children per woman to 2.6 children per woman in 2045-2050. The enormous potential for growth that the populations of the least developed countries have today can be gauged better by considering that, if fertility were to remain constant at the level it attained in 2000-2005, their overall population would surpass 2.7 billion in 2050.

10. Future fertility levels are key determinants of the expected population growth in other developing countries, especially the populous countries of Brazil, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan. According to the medium variant, the population of these five countries considered jointly is expected to increase from 1.9 billion persons in 2007 to 2.7 billion in 2050. However, were their fertility to remain constant at 2000-2005 levels, the expected increase would be 1.1 billion larger and their population would reach 3.8 billion in 2050. A similar comparison for the less developed regions as a whole indicates that if fertility remained constant from 2005 to 2050, their overall population would reach 10.5 billion in 2050 instead of the 7.8 billion projected under the medium variant.

11. Today, the world population is increasing by 76 million persons annually, 73 million of whom are being added to the less developed regions (see table 1). By 2050, according to the medium variant, the population of the less developed regions will be increasing by 35 million persons annually, whereas that of the more developed regions will be declining slowly by about a million persons per year. Furthermore, whereas in 2005-2010, the annual population increment in the least developed countries would account for about 25 per cent of the total increment to the less developed regions as a whole, by 2045-2050, it would represent 63 per cent of that increment.

12. According to the medium variant, the population of 31 countries, most of which are least developed countries, is likely to more than double between 2007 and 2050. Four countries are expected to see their population increase by over 100 million persons, namely, India with an expected increase of 457 million, Pakistan with 140 million, Nigeria with 121 million and the Democratic Republic of the Congo with 116 million. Partly because of the rapid growth expected in many developing countries, more than half of them consider that their population growth is still too high. Among the 50 least developed countries, 50 per cent considered their population growth as too high in 1986 but by 2005, 80 per cent did so. That is, there is increasing recognition among developing countries that the further reduction of population growth is necessary to ease mounting pressures on renewable and non-renewable resources and on the environment and to facilitate the achievement of all major development goals.

13. In contrast to most developing countries, developed countries tend to be concerned about the prospects of population decline. According to the medium variant, the populations of 51 countries are projected to decrease between 2007 and 2050. In particular, the population of the Russian Federation is expected to drop by 30 million, that of Ukraine by 19 million, that of Japan by 16 million and those of Italy and Poland by 7 million each. Population decline and the associated

acceleration of population ageing are therefore important concerns in a growing number of countries.

III. Levels and trends in fertility and contraception

14. One of the major demographic changes occurring during the twentieth century was the nearly universal reduction of fertility, especially in developing countries. In 1965-1970, total fertility at the world level was nearly five children per woman but by 2005-2010 it had reached 2.6 children per woman (see table 2). Reductions in the fertility levels of the less developed regions, from six children per woman in 1965-1970 to 2.8 children per woman in 2005-2010, were the main cause of the decline of fertility at the global level. By 2005, most developing countries were far advanced in the transition to low fertility, but 13 countries, most of them belonging to the group of least developed countries still exhibited no evidence of declining fertility. Furthermore, 44 countries were estimated to still have a total fertility above four children per woman in 2005-2010. High fertility levels, unless accompanied by very high levels of mortality, result in rapid population growth, which is particularly onerous for poor countries. For this reason, more than half of developing countries have policies to lower fertility and among the 50 least developed countries, 75 per cent report having such policies.

Table 2
Total fertility in the world, the development groups and the major areas

	Total fertility (average children per woman)		
Major area	*1965-1970*	*2005-2010*	*2045-2050*
World	4.9	2.5	2.0
More developed regions	2.4	1.6	1.8
Less developed regions	6.0	2.7	2.1
Least developed countries	6.7	4.7	2.6
Other less developed countries	5.9	2.4	1.9
Africa	6.8	4.7	2.5
Asia	5.7	2.3	1.9
Europe	2.4	1.4	1.8
Latin America and the Caribbean	5.6	2.4	1.9
North America	2.5	2.0	1.9
Oceania	3.6	2.2	1.9

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division: World Population Prospects DEMOBASE, extracted in 2007.

15. The transition to low fertility started first in developed countries. Consequently, by 1965-1970, the more developed regions as a whole already had a low fertility of 2.4 children per woman. Over the course of the subsequent decades, fertility levels continued to decline, so that today most developed countries are experiencing levels of fertility that cannot ensure the replacement of generations. It

is estimated that in 2005-2010, some 85 countries or areas, including 53 located in the more developed regions, had fertility levels below 2.1 children per woman. For many of these countries, continued low fertility will result in the eventual reduction of the population and will accelerate population ageing.

16. The prevalence of low fertility is a concern for a growing number of countries. Among the 46 countries that consider their fertility to be too low, 28 are in Europe and 11 in Asia. Furthermore, 66 per cent of developed countries consider their fertility levels to be too low, up from 20 per cent in the mid-1970s.

17. High fertility during adolescence is an issue that many Governments are concerned about, because having a child too early in life not only may endanger the lives of mother and child but is also likely to reduce the choices women have to improve their standard of living, especially if early childbearing curtails their chances of improving their education. More than 80 per cent of developing countries and more than half of developed countries report having policies and programmes focusing on adolescent fertility.

18. Although contraceptive use has increased markedly since 1990, many of the high fertility countries still report low contraceptive prevalence among women who are married or in union. At the global level, contraceptive prevalence among those women increased from 54 per cent in 1990 to an estimated 63 per cent in 2000. The fastest increases were in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, where contraceptive prevalence increased by more than 1 percentage point per year on average. The increase was less rapid in Asia, where contraceptive prevalence increased by 0.8 percentage points annually during 1990-2000. Nevertheless, contraceptive prevalence in Africa, at 27.3 per cent, remains far below the average for the less developed regions (59 per cent). In addition, among the 42 least developed countries with data, average contraceptive prevalence is estimated at 28 per cent.

19. Modern methods account for a large proportion of current contraceptive use, especially in the less developed regions where they account for 90 per cent of contraceptive use compared with 81 per cent in the more developed regions. The three methods most used are female sterilization, the intra-uterine device (IUD) and the pill, with prevalence levels of 21 per cent, 14 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively. These three methods account for two thirds of contraceptive use worldwide.

20. Traditional methods are more popular in developed countries than in developing countries: they are used by 13 per cent of married couples in developed countries compared with just 6 per cent in developing countries. The most used traditional methods are rhythm (periodic abstinence) and withdrawal. At the world level, those methods are used by about 7 per cent of women who are married or in union.

21. Short-acting and reversible methods are popular in developed countries, whereas longer-acting methods are preferred in developing countries. In developed countries, contraceptive users rely mostly on the pill (used by 16 per cent of women who are married or in union) and condoms (used by 13 per cent). In contrast, female sterilization and IUDs, used by 23 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively, of women who are married or in union, dominate in developing countries.

IV. Trends in mortality, including the impact of HIV/AIDS

22. The sustained reduction of mortality, which started in the eighteenth century, gained momentum during the twentieth century as better hygiene, improved nutrition and scientific medical practices expanded mainly in today's developed countries. By 1950-1955, the more developed regions had reaped the benefits of such advances, reaching a life expectancy at birth of 66 years for both sexes combined. Since then, their life expectancy has continued to increase to reach 76 years in 2005-2010 (see table 3).

Table 3
Life expectancy at birth for both sexes combined in the world, the development groups and the major areas

	Life expectancy at birth for both sexes (years)				*Average annual increase (years)*		
Major area	*1950-1955*	*1990-1995*	*2005-2010*	*2045-2050*	*1950-1955 to 1990-1995*	*1990-1995 to 2005-2010*	*2005-2010 to 2045-2050*
World	46.6	63.7	66.5	75.1	0.4	0.2	0.2
More developed regions	66.1	74.0	76.2	82.1	0.2	0.1	0.1
Less developed regions	41.1	61.5	64.6	74.0	0.5	0.2	0.2
Least developed countries	36.1	49.4	52.5	66.5	0.3	0.2	0.4
Other less developed countries	41.9	63.8	67.3	76.3	0.5	0.2	0.2
Africa	38.4	50.8	49.9	65.4	0.3	-0.1	0.4
Asia	41.4	64.0	68.8	77.2	0.6	0.3	0.2
Europe	65.6	72.6	74.3	80.6	0.2	0.1	0.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	51.4	68.3	72.9	79.5	0.4	0.3	0.2
North America	68.8	75.5	78.2	82.7	0.2	0.2	0.1
Oceania	60.4	71.5	75.1	81.2	0.3	0.2	0.2

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division: World Population Prospects DEMOBASE, extracted in 2007.

23. The mid-century marked an important turning point in the less developed regions. With the expanded use of antibiotics, vaccines and insecticides, mortality in the developing world declined rapidly. Consequently, life expectancy at birth in the less developed regions increased from 41 years in 1950-1955 to 65 in 2005-2010. Therefore, the gap in life expectancy between the developed and the developing world narrowed, from 25 years in 1950-1955 to 12 years in 2005-2010. However, in the least developed countries, the reduction of mortality has not kept pace with the changes occurring elsewhere in the developing world. Thus, life expectancy in the least developed countries increased from 36 years in 1950-1955 to 53 years in 2005-2010, implying that the difference in life expectancy between them and the less developed regions as a whole increased from five years in the early 1950s to 12 years today. The main cause for such divergence is that 31 of the 50 least developed countries are highly affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

24. Indeed, the emergence of the virus that causes the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and the worldwide pandemic that it has generated have already produced marked increases in mortality in the countries most affected by the disease. In 2005, an estimated 40 million people were living with HIV and more than 90 per cent of them lived in developing countries, with sub-Saharan Africa alone being home to two thirds of all infected persons. Furthermore, the number of countries with significant levels of HIV prevalence has been growing in other major areas, particularly in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. While it is not yet certain that the spread of the disease in those major areas might follow the devastating pattern observed in Africa, rapid and effective responses are required to avert a similar scenario in other regions. Clearly, concern about the impact of HIV/AIDS has been increasing. Thus, almost 90 per cent of developing countries report that AIDS is a major cause of concern, as do nearly all the least developed countries. Concern has also been substantial in developed countries, 75 per cent of which view AIDS as a major concern.

25. With regard to gender differences in mortality, by 2005-2010, female life expectancy was higher than male life expectancy in all regions, although the difference between the two was relatively small in South-Central Asia. Since 1950, female life expectancy increased more than male life expectancy in Asia, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. In contrast, in Africa, North America and Oceania, the female advantage remained relatively unchanged or declined. In Europe, females made the greatest gains with respect to males, whereas in Africa males made the greatest gains with respect to females.

26. Because differences in life expectancy are still high between developed and developing countries, the views of Governments about the adequacy of mortality levels vary according to development group. Thus, about 65 per cent of developed countries consider their life expectancy levels to be acceptable, but just 36 per cent of developing countries do so, and none of the least developed countries are in that category.

27. In many countries, some segments of the population, particularly infants and children under age 5, continue to experience unacceptably high mortality levels and require special policy attention. Maternal mortality is another serious concern in developing countries, particularly in the least developed. Just 20 per cent of developing countries consider their levels of maternal mortality acceptable, while about 66 per cent of developed countries do so. Only two of the least developed countries consider their levels of maternal mortality to be acceptable.

28. Continued reductions in mortality are projected for most regions of the world so that life expectancy in some of them is projected to reach levels unprecedented in human history. However, for the least developed countries, even the substantial reductions expected to take place during 2005-2050 are unlikely to eliminate the gap in survivorship that exists between them and the rest of the developing world. Moreover, given the setbacks that have occurred recently in many countries, there is considerable uncertainty about whether the improvements projected may be achieved.

V. International migration

29. In 2005, there were 191 million migrants in the world: 115 million in developed countries and 75 million in developing countries (see table 4). These figures reflect the number of foreign-born persons, that is, persons living outside their country of birth. Between 1990 and 2005, the world's migrant stock, including refugees, rose by 36 million, from 155 million to 191 million. The growth rate of the migrant stock has been accelerating, increasing from 1.4 per cent in 1990-1995 to 1.9 per cent in 2000-2004. In developed countries, the number of international migrants increased by 33 million between 1990 and 2005, whereas in developing countries the increase was barely 3 million. Consequently, in 2005, 61 per cent of all international migrants lived in developed countries. Europe alone had 34 per cent; North America, 23 per cent; and Asia, 28 per cent. Africa had just 9 per cent and Latin America and the Caribbean, 4 per cent.

Table 4
Estimated number of international migrants and their percentage distribution by major area, including percentage of female migrants

	Number of international migrants (millions)		*Increment (millions)*	*Percentage distribution of international migrants*		*Percentage of female migrants*	
Major area	*1990*	*2005*	*1990-2005*	*1990*	*2005*	*1990*	*2005*
World	154.8	190.6	35.8	100	100	49.0	49.6
More developed regions	82.4	115.4	33.0	53	61	52.0	52.2
Less developed regions	72.5	75.2	2.8	47	39	45.7	45.5
Least developed countries	11.0	10.5	-0.5	7	5	46.2	46.5
Africa	16.4	17.1	0.7	11	9	45.9	47.4
Asia	49.8	53.3	3.5	32	28	45.1	44.7
Latin America and the Caribbean	7.0	6.6	-0.3	5	3	49.7	50.3
North America	27.6	44.5	16.9	18	23	51.0	50.4
Europe	49.4	64.1	14.7	32	34	52.8	53.4
Oceania	4.8	5.0	0.3	3	3	49.1	51.3
High-income countries	71.6	112.3	40.6	46	59	47.9	48.7
High-income developed countries	57.4	90.8	33.4	37	48	50.1	50.8
High-income developing countries	14.2	21.5	7.3	9	11	39.3	39.8
Upper-middle-income countries	24.7	25.7	1.0	16	13	52.5	52.9
Lower-middle-income countries	24.8	22.6	-2.2	16	12	51.7	52.9
Low-income countries	32.7	28.0	-4.7	21	15	46.9	47.8

Source: United Nations, *Trends in Total Migrant Stock: the 2005 Revision.*
Note: The World Bank classification is used in reporting the distribution by income level.

30. Today, 28 countries host 75 per cent of all international migrants, down from 30 countries in 1990 (see map 1). The United States of America had 15 per cent of all migrants in 1990 and today has 20 per cent. Between 1990 and 2005, 17 countries accounted for 75 per cent of the increase in the number of international migrants. The United States gained 15 million migrants and Germany and Spain followed, with gains above 4 million each.

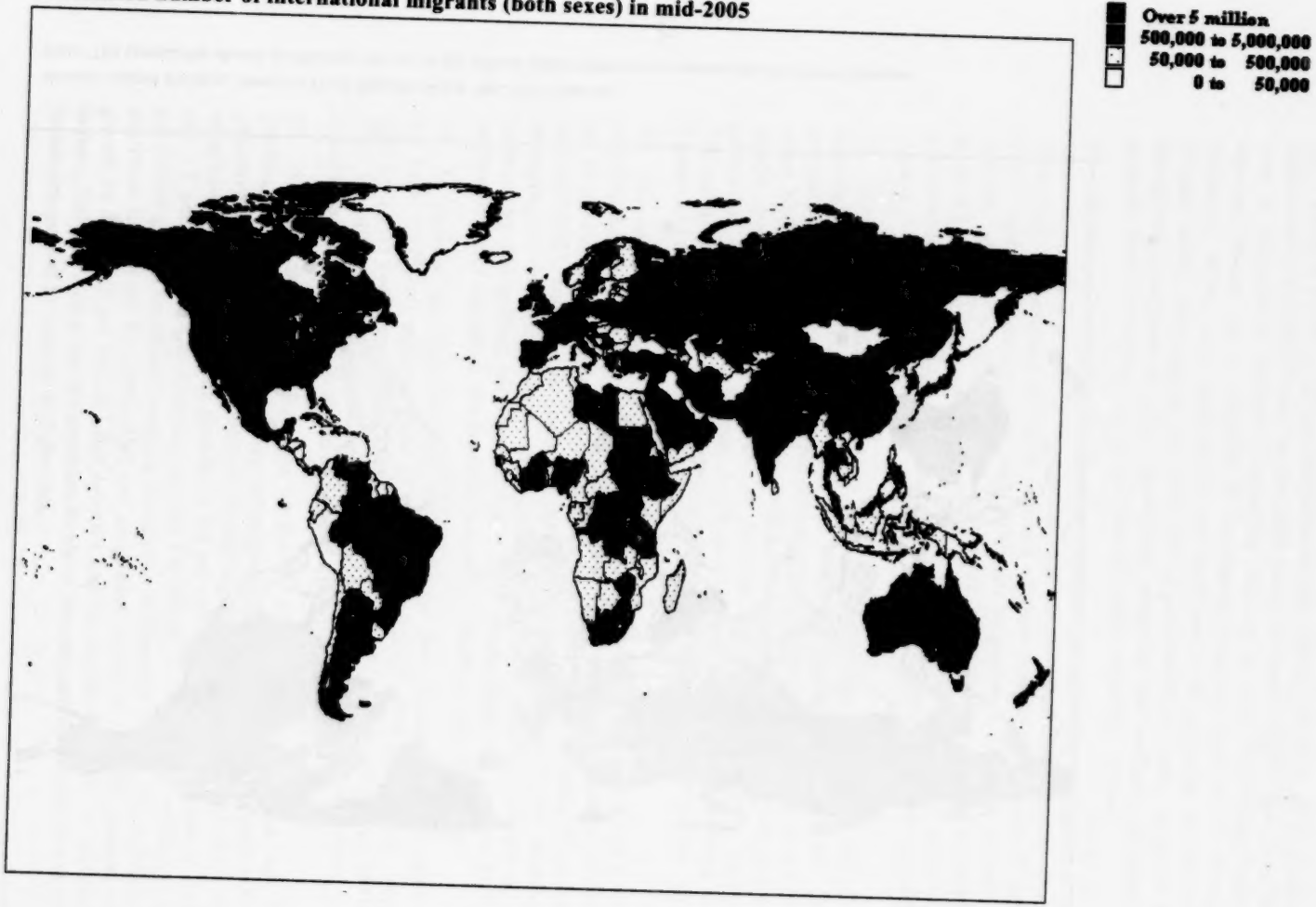
31. The growth of the migrant stock has been mostly concentrated in high-income countries, whether developed or developing (see table 4). By 2005, 48 per cent of all international migrants lived in high-income developed countries and 11 per cent in high-income developing countries. Both groups saw their share of international migrants rise since 1990. By contrast, the shares of international migrants in middle-income and low-income countries fell over the same period. In 2005, 25 per cent of all migrants lived in middle-income countries and just 15 per cent in low-income countries. Between 1990 and 2005, the number of migrants declined in 72 countries, most of them middle-income and low-income countries.

32. Although international migrants are concentrated in relatively few countries, they account for at least 20 per cent of the populations of 41 countries, 31 of which have less than a million inhabitants (see map 2). High concentrations of migrants are found in the Member States of: the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC); and in Hong Kong, China; Israel; Jordan; Singapore; and Switzerland. In Australia and Saudi Arabia, countries with overall populations above 10 million, migrants constitute at least a fifth of the population.

33. In 2005, female migrants constituted about half of all international migrants (49.6 per cent). In developed countries, female migrants have outnumbered male migrants since 1990, but in developing countries they account today for just 45.5 per cent of all international migrants. Female migrants are particularly underrepresented in Asia and, in particular, in the GCC countries, where they constitute barely 29 per cent of all international migrants. Generally, where migrant inflows involve mainly contract workers, the proportion of females in the migrant stock is low.

Map 1

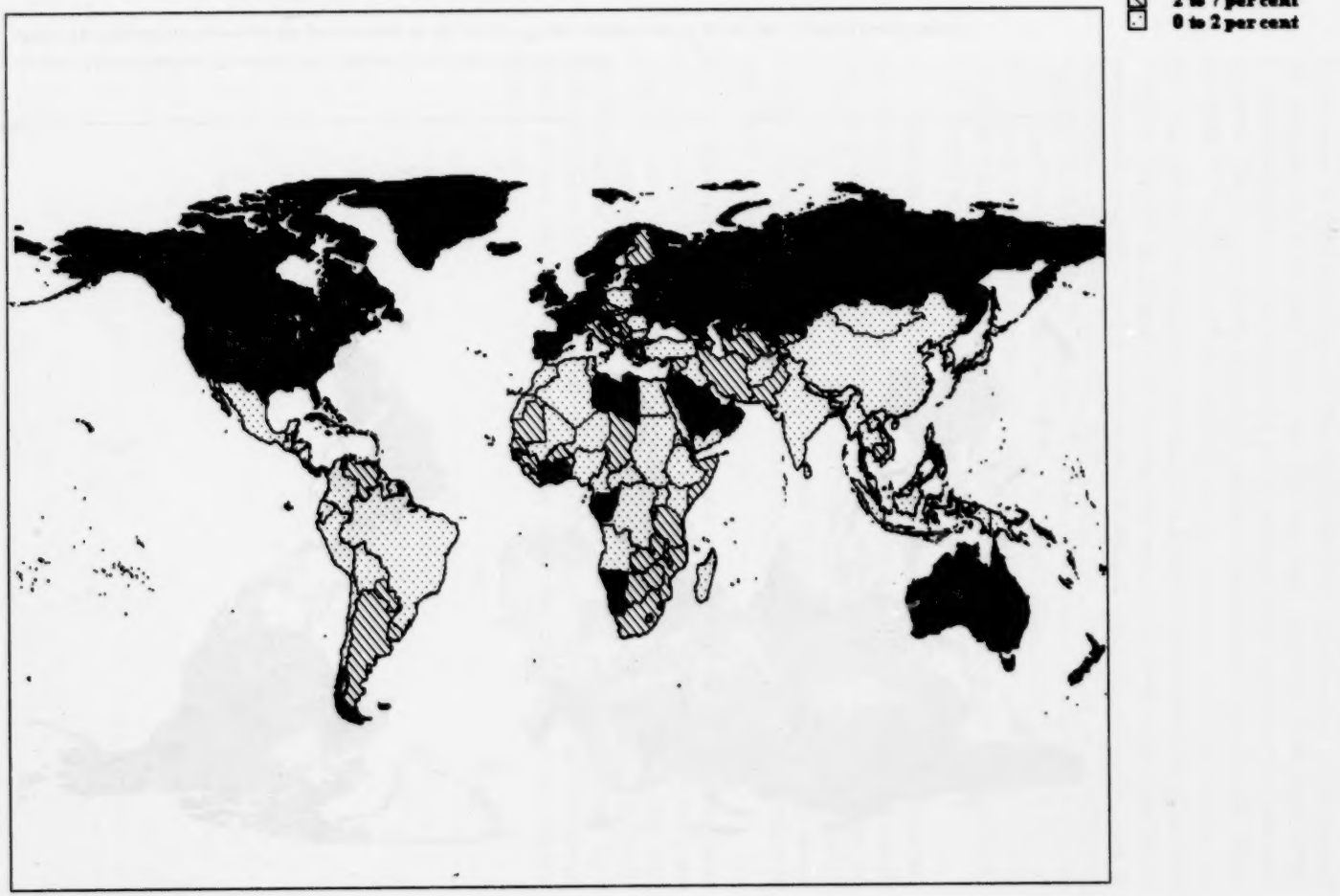
Estimated number of international migrants (both sexes) in mid-2005



Source: United Nations, *Trends in Total Migrant Stock: the 2005 Revision.*

Note: The boundaries shown on the present map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Map 2
Number of international migrants as percentage of the total population in 2005



Source: United Nations, *Trends in Total Migrant Stock: the 2005 Revision.*

Note: The boundaries shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

34. There is no set of global estimates for the number of migrants originating in each country. Estimates based on the 2000 round of census suggest that about 80 per cent of migrants in developing countries originate in other developing countries, whereas 54 per cent of migrants in developed countries originate in developing countries. When these proportions are combined with estimates of the global migrant stock, they suggest that there are approximately as many migrants from developing countries in other developing countries (60 million) as there are migrants from developing countries in the developed world (62 million).

35. Because of prevailing low fertility, international migration is making a major contribution to the growth of the population in the more developed regions. Thus, in 2000-2005 it accounted for three quarters of their population growth. If current trends continue, between 2010 and 2030, net migration will likely account for virtually all the population growth in more developed regions. Thereafter, a projected net migration gain of 2.2 million migrants annually is not expected to counterbalance the expected excess of deaths over births in the more developed regions.

36. Europe's population would have been decreasing since 1995 were it not for net migration. Despite averaging some 1.1 million migrants annually since 1995, international migration has not been able to prevent population reductions in Europe since 2000 and will likely continue to fall short in counterbalancing the excess of deaths over births projected for the coming decades. As a result, Europe's population is expected to decrease by 75 million from 2005 to 2050, passing from 728 million to 653 million. Without migration gains, the projected reduction would amount to 119 million.

37. Migration has also been making a major contribution to the population growth of North America and Oceania. In North America, net migration accounts currently for 44 per cent of population growth and this share is expected to attain 50 per cent by 2020-2025 and 78 per cent by 2045-2050. With projected net migration averaging 1.3 million annually, the population of North America is expected to increase by 107 million between 2005 and 2045, rising from 331 million to 438 million. Without migration, the population would increase by just 22 million.

38. In Oceania, net migration accounts for 24 per cent of population growth and this share will likely remain below 50 per cent until 2050. With a projected annual migration gain averaging about 93,000, the population of Oceania is expected to rise from 33 million in 2005 to 48 million in 2050. In the absence of migration, the expected population in 2050 would be close to 42 million.

39. Although the other major areas — Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean — have been experiencing net migration losses since 1950, migration has generally not reduced their population growth significantly. During 2000-2005, net emigration reduced population growth by 2.4 per cent in Africa, 2.7 per cent in Asia and 9.5 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, the reduction of population growth associated with net emigration is expected to increase as fertility continues to decline. By 2045-2050, net emigration could be reducing population growth by nearly 25 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean and by 11 per cent in Asia. Only for Africa are the expected levels of net emigration unlikely to reduce population growth by more than 2 per cent.

40. At the country level, the contribution of international migration to population growth varies considerably. Among the 203 countries or areas with growing populations, net migration accounted for more than 50 per cent of population growth in 33, 20 of which were in Europe and 7 in Asia. Migration can also reduce population growth. In 23 countries with growing populations, net emigration reduced population growth by more than 50 per cent. These countries were mostly small, especially the island States, 11 of which are in Latin America and the Caribbean, six in Oceania and four in Africa. In addition, during 2000-2005, the population of 19 countries decreased and in all but three of them, net migration was negative, implying that it either caused the reduction of population or exacerbated it.

41. International migration affects not only the size and growth of populations, but also their composition by age, since migrants tend to be younger than the population at destination. Sustained in-migration over lengthy periods can therefore slow population ageing and lower dependency ratios. However, for this effect to be significant, it is necessary to sustain high levels of net in-migration for lengthy periods. That has been the experience of the small labour-importing countries of Asia, such as Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar or the United Arab Emirates. However, in countries with larger populations, the impact of international migration on age structures has generally been modest. Therefore, although international migration can play a role in mitigating population decline or slowing population ageing, it cannot reverse those trends unless its volume increases markedly. Simulations indicate, for instance, that to maintain the size of its population of working age constant, Europe would have to increase its net migration intake fourfold.

VI. Population ageing

42. The main demographic consequence of fertility decline, especially when combined with increases in life expectancy, is population ageing. In 1950, just over 8 per cent of the world population was aged 60 years or over. By 2007, that proportion had risen to 11 per cent and it is expected to reach 22 per cent in 2050. Globally, the number of persons aged 60 or over will more than triple, increasing from 705 million in 2007 to almost 2 billion by 2050. By 2050, the number of older persons in the world will exceed the number of children (that is, persons under age 15) for the first time in history. Because developed countries as a whole are more advanced in the path to population ageing, this historic reversal in the proportion of children (17 per cent) and that of older persons (21 per cent) has already happened in that group of countries. By 2050, the proportion of older persons in developed countries (32 per cent) is projected to be double the proportion of children (16 per cent).

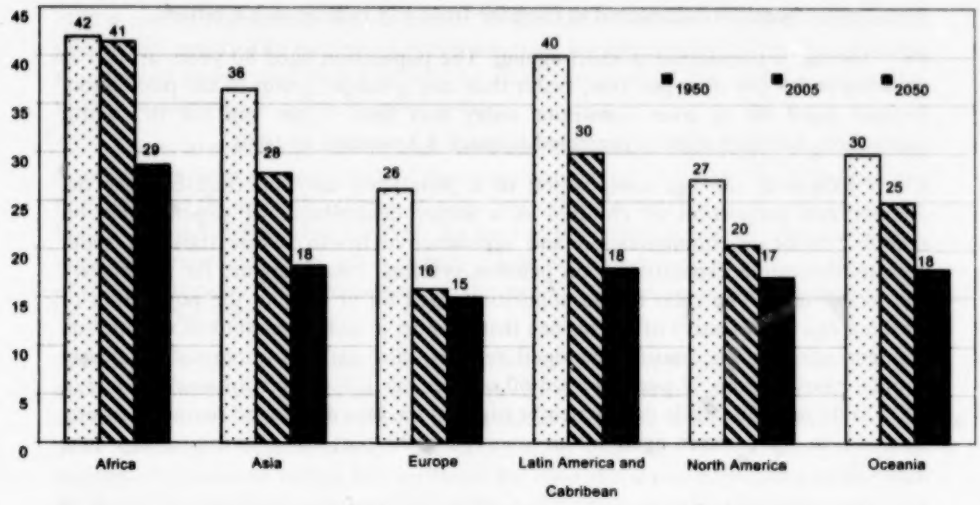
43. Compared to the more developed regions, the developing world is still relatively young. Thus, children constitute 30 per cent of the population of the less developed regions and persons aged 60 or over constitute just 8 per cent. However, because the decline in fertility in developing countries has been very fast, population ageing is expected to accelerate in the coming decades so that by 2050, older persons will account for 20 per cent of their population.

44. Europe is currently the major area with the highest proportion of older persons (21 per cent) and is projected to remain so until 2050, when that proportion will reach 35 per cent. In contrast, only 10 per cent of the population of Africa is projected to be 60 or over by 2050, up from 5 per cent in 2007 (see figure 1).

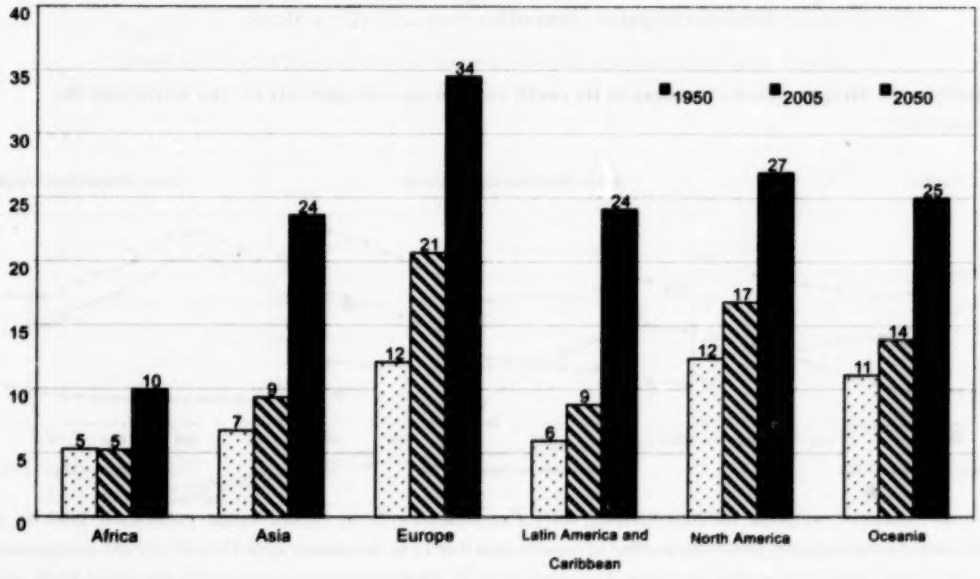
Figure I

Percentage of the population under age 15 and aged 60 or over in the major areas

A. *Percentage of the population under age 15*



B. *Percentage of the population age 60 or over*



45. Although the proportion of older persons is higher in the more developed regions, their number is large and increasing in the less developed regions. In 2007, 64 per cent of the population aged 60 or over lived in developing countries and by 2050, nearly 80 per cent will do so. Between 2007 and 2050, the older population in developing countries is expected to increase from 453 million to 1.6 billion.

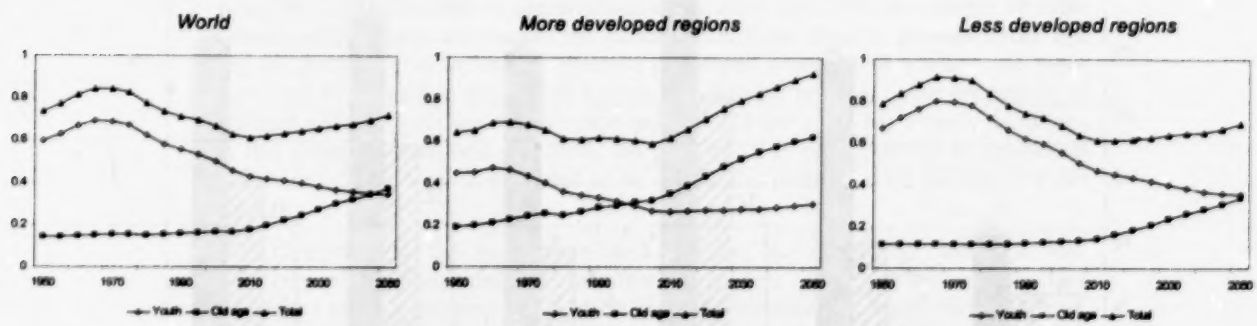
46. The older population is itself ageing. The population aged 80 years or over is growing at 3.9 per cent per year, faster than any younger group in the population. Persons aged 80 or over constitute today less than 2 per cent of the world population, but their share is projected to reach 4.3 per cent in 2050.

47. Changes in the age composition of a population are important because the number and proportion of children is a major determinant of expenditures on schools, childcare, immunization and reproductive health, while those of older persons determine expenditures on pension systems, other support for the elderly and health care. The ratio of the population aged 60 or over to the population of working age is indicative of the burden that support of older generations may put on younger ones. In the more developed regions, that ratio is projected to nearly double, passing from 32 persons aged 60 or over per 100 persons of working age in 2007 to 62 in 2050, while it may nearly triple in the less developed regions, passing from 13 to 34 persons aged 60 or over per 100 persons of working age (see figure 2).

48. Because female life expectancy, especially at older ages, is higher than that of men, the majority of older persons are women. Thus, at ages 60 and over, there are 82 men for every 100 women and women outnumber men by nearly 70 million. The preponderance of women among the older population implies that policies on population ageing need to focus specifically on women's needs, especially considering that older women are more likely to be illiterate than older men, to have a lower labour force participation than older men and to live alone.

Figure 2

Total dependency ratio disaggregated according to its youth and old-age components for the world and the development regions



Source: ***World Population Prospects: the 2004 Revision***, vol. I, ***Comprehensive Tables*** (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.XIII.5).

Note: The youth dependency ratio relates the number of persons aged 0 to 14 to the number aged 15 to 59; the old-age dependency ratio relates the number of persons aged 60 or over to those aged 15 to 59; the total dependency ratio is the sum of the youth and the old-age dependency ratios.

VII. Urbanization

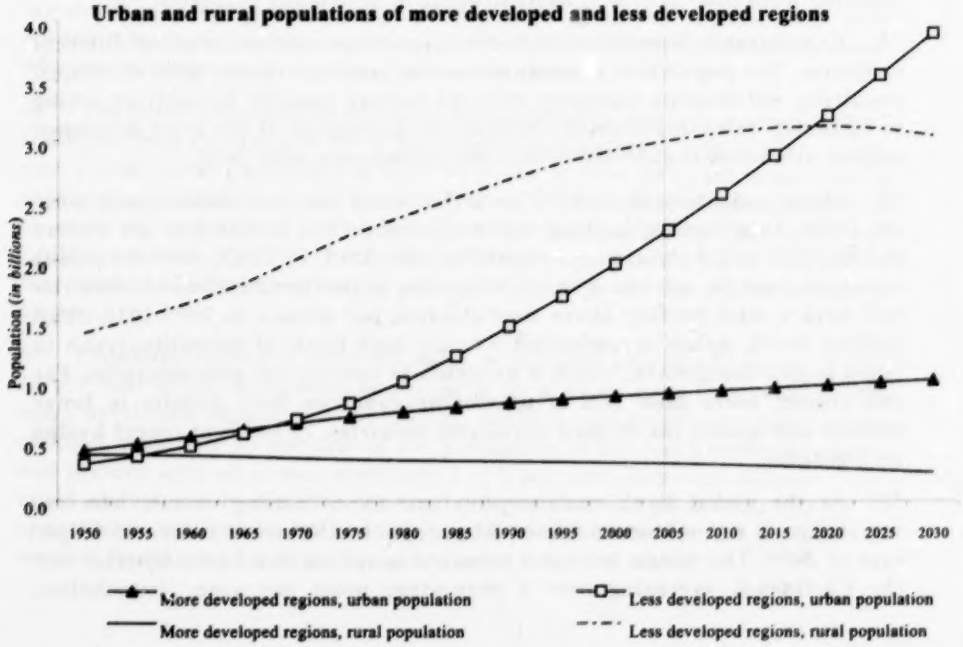
49. In 2008, for the first time in history, the number of urban dwellers is expected to equal and then surpass the number of inhabitants in rural areas. The urbanization of the world population, which began to accelerate in the twentieth century, is proceeding apace. The number of urban dwellers, which reached 3.2 billion in 2005, is expected to increase to 4.9 billion by 2030 and most of the world's population growth is expected to occur in urban areas.

50. There are striking differences between the more developed and the less developed regions in the growth of the urban population. In 2005, 74 per cent of the population of the more developed regions was urban, compared to 43 per cent in the less developed regions. By 2030, 56 per cent of the population in the less developed regions is expected to be urban, nearly triple the proportion in 1950. In the more developed regions, the proportion of the urban population is projected to reach 81 per cent by 2030.

51. Despite their lower levels of urbanization, less developed regions have more than twice the number of urban dwellers in the more developed regions: 2.3 billion compared to 0.9 billion (figure 3). Whereas in 1950 the urban population of the more developed regions was 37 per cent higher than that of the less developed regions (423 million versus 309 million), by 1968 the urban population of the less developed regions had surpassed that of the more developed. Furthermore, the rapid growth of the population of the less developed regions, combined with the near stagnation of the population in the more developed regions, implies that the gap in the number of urban dwellers between the two will continue to increase. By 2030, the urban population in the less developed regions is projected to be nearly four times as large as that in the more developed regions (3.9 billion versus 1 billion).

Figure 3

Urban and rural populations of more developed and less developed regions



52. Another important difference between the more developed regions and the less developed regions concerns trends in the growth of the rural population. Whereas the rural population of the more developed regions has been declining steadily since 1950, that of the less developed regions has continued to increase. In 2005, there were 3 billion rural dwellers in developing countries, compared to just 0.32 billion in developed countries. During 2005-2030, the rural population of developed countries will continue decreasing to reach 0.24 billion in 2030. In contrast, the rural population of developing countries will increase until 2019, to reach 3.1 billion, and will then start to decline slowly, so that by 2030 it will be only slightly higher than today.

53. During the next few decades, the urban areas of developing countries will absorb all the population growth expected worldwide. That is, global population growth is becoming largely an urban phenomenon concentrated in the less developed regions. As urbanization proceeds in developing countries, the speed and scale of urban population growth generate important challenges for urban and city planners as well as for Governments, especially in countries where urbanization has not been associated with sustained economic growth and development, such as in most of sub-Saharan Africa and in parts of Asia. In these and other parts of the developing world, increasing urban poverty and the growth of slums are two of the most pressing challenges facing urban areas.

VIII. Conclusions

54. **World population has reached 6.6 billion and is currently growing at about 1.14 per cent annually. The population is expected to reach 7 billion in 2013 and to surpass 9 billion by 2050, provided fertility continues to decline in the less developed regions. The large majority of the population growth expected from 2005 to 2050 is likely to occur in developing countries.**

55. **Considerable diversity exists in the expected population trends of different countries. The population of many countries, particularly the least developed countries, will increase markedly over the coming decades. In contrast, owing to sustained below-replacement fertility, the population of the more developed regions as a whole is expected to start decreasing soon after 2030.**

56. **Major reductions in fertility occurred in the less developed regions since the 1960s. Total fertility in those regions declined from six children per woman in 1965-1970 to 2.8 children per woman in 2005-2010. By 2005, most developing countries were far advanced in the transition to low fertility, but 44 countries still have a total fertility above four children per woman in 2005-2010. High fertility levels, unless accompanied by very high levels of mortality, result in rapid population growth, which is particularly onerous for poor countries. For this reason, more than half of developing countries have policies to lower fertility and among the 50 least developed countries, 75 per cent report having such policies.**

57. **At the global level, contraceptive prevalence among women who are married or in union increased from 54 per cent in 1990 to an estimated 63 per cent in 2000. The fastest increases occurred in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, averaging over 1 percentage point per year. Nevertheless,**

contraceptive prevalence in Africa remains very low (27.3 per cent) as does that in the least developed countries (28 per cent).

58. **The transition to low fertility first started in developed countries. By 1965-1970, their average fertility was 2.4 children per woman. Since then, fertility levels continued to decline and today most developed countries exhibit fertility levels that are not sufficient to ensure the replacement of generations. In 2005-2010, some 85 countries or areas, including 53 located in the more developed regions, had below-replacement fertility. For many of these countries, continued low fertility will result in the eventual reduction of the population and will accelerate population ageing.**

59. **Because of prevailing low fertility, international migration is making a major contribution to the growth of the population in the more developed regions. In 2000-2005, it accounted for three quarters of their population growth. If current trends continue, between 2010 and 2030, net migration will account for virtually all the population growth in more developed regions. Thereafter, a projected net migration gain of 2.2 million migrants annually is not expected to counterbalance the expected excess of deaths over births in the more developed regions.**

60. **At the global level, life expectancy has increased markedly since 1950, reaching 66.5 years in 2005-2010. However, there are major differences in life expectancy between developed and developing countries. In developed countries as a whole, life expectancy today averages 76 years, compared to 65 years in developing countries. Furthermore, life expectancy remains a low 53 years, on average, in the least developed countries, two thirds of which are severely affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Although continued reductions in mortality are projected in the future, it is not expected that the gap in survivorship that exists between the least developed countries and the rest of the developing world will disappear. Moreover, given the setbacks that have occurred recently in many countries, there is considerable uncertainty about whether the improvements projected may be achieved.**

61. **The main demographic consequence of fertility decline, especially when combined with increases in life expectancy, is population ageing. Today, 11 per cent of the world population is aged 60 years or over and that proportion is expected to reach 22 per cent in 2050. Globally, the number of persons aged 60 or over will more than triple, passing from 705 million in 2007 to almost 2 billion by 2050. By 2050, the number of older persons in the world will exceed the number of children (that is, persons under age 15) for the first time in history.**

62. **Population ageing is more advanced in the more developed regions, where 21 per cent of the population is currently aged 60 or over. Compared to the more developed regions, the developing world is still relatively young. Thus, children constitute 30 per cent of the population of the less developed regions and persons aged 60 or over constitute just 8 per cent. However, because of the rapid reductions in fertility in developing countries, population ageing is expected to accelerate in the coming decades so that by 2050, older persons will account for 20 per cent of their population.**

63. Changes in the age composition of a population determine the allocation of expenditures on services needed by the different segments of the population. The ratio of the population aged 60 or over to the population of working age is indicative of the burden that support of older generations may put on younger ones. In the developed countries, that ratio is projected nearly to double, passing from 32 persons aged 60 or over per 100 persons of working age in 2007 to 62 in 2050 and it is expected nearly to triple in the less developed regions, passing from 13 to 34 persons aged 60 or over per 100 persons of working age.

64. In 2008, the number of urban dwellers will surpass the number of rural inhabitants for the first time in history. The world's urban population, which reached 3.2 billion in 2005, is expected to increase to 4.9 billion by 2030 and most of the world's population growth is expected to occur in urban areas.

65. The level of urbanization is lower in the less developed regions (43 per cent) than in the more developed regions (74 per cent). However, the less developed regions have more than twice the number of urban dwellers in the more developed regions: 2.3 billion versus 0.9 billion. By 2030, the urban population in the less developed regions is projected to be 3.9 billion, four times as large as in the more developed regions (1 billion).

66. The rural population in the less developed regions, at 3 billion, is ten times larger than the rural population in the more developed regions (0.3 billion). Furthermore, during 2005-2030, the rural population in developed countries is expected to continue its long-term decreasing trend, reaching 0.24 billion in 2030. In contrast, the rural population of developing countries will increase until 2019, reaching 3.1 billion, and will then start a slow decline.